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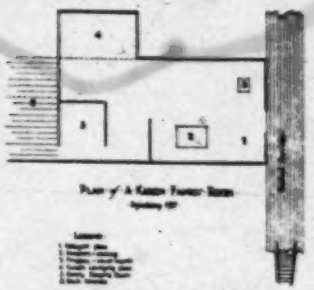
of sleeping on, or a single large bamboo mat, besides a quantity of old clothes, blankets, pillows, and rags scattered about or hanging from the rough ends of the walls. At either the front or back of the large outer room, whichever is toward the east—the place of honor in a Karen house—is a raised platform called the "hso hko." This is about a cubit's height from the floor and has a mat on it worn shiny with much sitting. It is the place where guests are received, especially if they are people of note. Here against the wall are a few pillows, which may be half-round bamboos of giant size, that is, from eight to ten inches in diameter, or cloth pillows filled with fibre from the cotton tree *(Bombax heterophylla)*. The guest is invited to sit on the platform and to partake of the contents of the fragrant betel-box, which is sure to be hospitably pushed in front of him. The cradle usually hangs from the crossbeams in the middle of the room, being held up by fibre ropes, although occasionally elephant chains are called into use to give full measure of security. The cradle itself may be a blanket swung up at the four corners, or it may be part of the trunk of a large hollow tree. A basket-work cradle is scarcely ever found in old Karen homes.



At the back of the family apartment the bamboo joists and flooring project several feet beyond the wall, forming a primitive back veranda where clothes are hung to dry; rice (paddy), fish, fruit, and vegetables are set out in the sun, and other domestic operations are carried on in private.

In a few Karen villages a young men's club-room ("blaw") is still maintained, but not in most. Where such a room exists, it does not differ in general appearance from a family-room, except that it has no partitions. The hearth in the middle of the space serves as a social fireside on cold mornings and evenings. At the east end a raised dais extends the width of the room, being used both for reception and for sleeping purposes. Guests, unless closely related to some family in the village, usually sleep here, except when, as a mark of respect, they are invited to sleep in a room apart on the "hso hko" with the men of the house. Women guests sleep in the family sleeping-room together with the women folk and children.

The old type of Karen village-house, such as we have been describing above, is being modified by contact with the Burmese

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A Hillside Plot Cut Ready for Burning

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A Paddy-bird for Driving Crops in the Field
The bamboo clappers in the foreground are for scaring away the birds.

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the clappers, and clearing the traps. When wild elephants appear in the field, those on guard are unable to do more than produce affrighting noises from a safe distance, in the hope that the great animals will be scared away before they have destroyed the entire crop.

As soon as the rains are over in October the hill rice ripens very quickly, and the harvest-time is near. Among some of the people it is the custom for the eldest member of the family to reap a little of the grain as the first fruit, as it were, of the season's produce. After this has been done, the whole family take part in the reaping. (See page 89.) The implement used is a sickle ("xeh"), the long handle of which bends backward from the grip, the tool as a whole having the shape of the letter S. The outer end of the sickle extends under the arm of the reaper, enabling him to cut with greater ease than if he depended only on his wrist muscles. The grain is cut about half-way down the stalks and is tied in small sheaves no larger than can be easily grasped with one hand. Even though all the paddy in the plot could be cut in one day, a fraction is left for reaping until the next morning, in order to have the crop good and make it last longer. The sheaves are thrown into piles, and then collected near the hut, where they are beaten out. In some places the sheaves are beaten over the edge of a trough improvised from half of a hollow log, and in others they are beaten over a horizontal pole tied by withes to two bamboo posts, the pole being about three feet above the ground. A large bamboo mat is spread down under the pole or the trough, as the case may be, to catch the grain. Those who engage in the beating are careful to tie up their wrists and call in the "k'las" or wandering shades. They also deem it necessary to complete the threshing before they leave the place. Both men and women or either alone serve as threshers. When the paddy has all been beaten out, it is winnowed by holding it aloft in a tray or basket and letting it fall, while the wind carries the chaff to one side and the grain falls on the mat. (See page 91.) The grain is now ready to be stored in a bin built in the field or along the path leading to the village. In the districts inhabited only by Karens these bins are to be found along the jungle trails a mile or more from any village or house. Stealing is very uncommon in these regions and is severely punished if detected.[1] In the Pegu Hills near the Burmese the same security does not exist, and the paddy is stored within the village stockade.

[1] See pages 27, 169.

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343 The grain is carried in baskets on the backs of the beaters (see p. 94) and is poured slowly into the bin so as not to settle compactly. Should a basket slip and fall into the bin or its contents be dashed in, a fowl must be killed and an offering made. The storing of grain must be finished as speedily as possible; but if it can not be done in one day, the workers may rest over night.

The task of storing finished, they bring an offering for "Hpi Bi Yaw." [1] consisting of a clod of earth, a morsel of rice, and a small cup of liquor. These are placed on the paddy in the bin, and a prayer of thanksgiving is said to her. After these ceremonies the cultivator feels at liberty to take grain from his store and carry it home for food.

A small supply of paddy is always put aside in a special basket for seed, each family preserving its own, which is supposed to date back to a time when its forbears had an unusually good crop in some favorable year. Only in the last extremity will a Karen eat his seed-grain. There are many varieties of rice having their special names, each cherished by particular localities and families. Hill rice is greatly prized as being more delicious than plains rice.

244 The Karen raise different kinds of vegetables in their rice-fields, such as certain varieties of gourds, beans, yams, a kind of sweet potato, and peppers of various sorts, especially the red chili so generally used for condiment. Cotton is also grown in the fields along with the rice, standing until long after the paddy has been reaped. The cotton is usually considered to be the women's crop. They tend it, gather the bolls, and carry them home. The other products of the field seem to belong to all members of a family alike. The tips of various plants are used for greens. These must be plucked with the fingers and not cut off with a sharp instrument, inasmuch as the spirits dislike their being dissevered with a knife. A few plants of cockscomb are grown in the field, the red variety ("hpaw ghaw") being preferred to the yellow, because they are supposed to dazzle the eyes of the demons and prevent their harming the crop. In the lower hills sesame is often raised for its seeds, which are threshed out and sold to the Burmese, who press the oil out of them. This is serviceable in cooking and lighting. It is said to be not unlike linseed oil in certain respects, but supplies a large amount of the fats required in curries.

245 In the Toungoo and Shwegyin Hills great quantities of betel-nuts are grown. These regions furnish, I believe, the greater part

[1] The divinity who presides over the cultivation of the paddy: see page 224.

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243 In these days it is the usual practice to sell the grain to the
442 traders directly from the threshing-floor. Sometimes it is stored for a few months in the hope of an advance in price, but most of the smaller cultivators are compelled by their poverty to sell at once. The buyers may be Burmans, but in these later years are more often Chinese. A few Karens have done some trading in paddy, although they are generally not so successful as the traders of the other nationalities.

343 The grain kept for family use is stored in bins of bamboo made in the shape of great baskets or "weh." These "weh" vary in size from those having double the diameter of a bushel-basket up to the huge ones of ten or twelve feet in diameter and of equal height. They are set upon platforms several feet above the ground and adjoining or close to the house. The planks forming the bottom are firmly secured together and coated with cow-dung. After a bin has been filled, the top is covered with a layer of straw, well packed in, and a thick coating of cow-dung is spread over it to seal the grain.

421 It is not my purpose in this work to enter into a detailed eco-
435 nomic study of Karen agriculture. Here I have but a few observations to offer. Under the conditions obtaining just before the World War, the economic outlook for the Karen cultivator was none too good. The Karen people are no more provident than the Burmese. At the beginning of the season they borrow money, for which they must pay one hundred baskets of paddy for fifty rupees of money.[1] If they have no oxen of buffaloes of their own they must hire them, paying from fifty to sixty rupees a yoke for the former and ten rupees additional each for the latter. To hire a man to work in the rainy season and to plow costs about the same as paying for the use of a team of oxen. If he is employed until the threshing is finished, he costs another fifty rupees. The yield per acre varies all the way from twenty-five to seventy baskets, according to the quality of the land and whether a little manure has been used or not. For many years the price of paddy remained close to one hundred rupees for one hundred baskets, being sometimes a little below and at others a few rupees above that price. Before the war competition and speculation had forced the price up gradually, until it reached a maximum of one hundred and thirty-five rupees.

[1] The size of baskets varies in different districts, ranging in capacity from forty to sixty pounds. Those having a capacity of forty-six pounds are now considered to be of standard size. As the price varies inversely with the size, the result is about the same.

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no reference to the object of the call. This whole procedure illustrates not only a Karen, but also an Oriental, trait of character. The Oriental deals in indirect methods, rather than run the risk of saying something disagreeable. 584

Realising that his mission is not in vain, the intermediary enters the house of the prospective bride's parents in joyous mood, fairly shouting the Karen version of "tra-la-la," which is "traw-le, wa-le, ho-o-o." They sit down and discuss the matter. Then the parents kill a fowl or a pig, and the guest stays for dinner in token that the bargain is sealed. After the date for the wedding-feast has been set, the intermediary returns to the young man's family and reports his success. As a rule the time of the feast is fixed by the maiden's parents, but it is sometimes determined by the youth's family.

The only month that is tabu for wedding-feasts is "La plü" (December). This is the month when the moon is most often eclipsed (swallowed by the dogs). To many the month seems as though it were killed and is, therefore, regarded as inauspicious for new life. Others say that it is the month when neither birds nor animals mate, and that it is unwise for men to undertake to start a new household. The favorite months for marriages are March and April in the dry season, because the harvest is past, the weather is good, and there is plenty to eat and drink. The date of the wedding must fall during the waxing of the moon, which augurs an increasing family. This important point being settled, the prospective bride busies herself less with the preparation of her own trousseau than with the weaving of a set of new garments for her future husband, including a white turban, a white blanket with a red stripe running through it lengthwise, and, in the olden days, a "hse plo" or single smock. The maiden's family prepare the rice, fish-paste, pork, and liquor for the feast. The prospective groom has only to make for himself a horn to be blown at the festivities. On the plains and in those places in the hills where each family has its separate house, a booth or "k'la pyeh" is built close at hand for the wedding-feasts.[4] This structure must be so placed as to have its entrance towards the tail of the "p'yo" or great dragon of the Karens. Not long ago I saw such a booth, which was enclosed on three sides and had a small open entrance to the east. The south side was entirely open. Access to the structure was had

585 787 805 292 534 585 343

[4] This booth is often called a "mandat." The name, "k'la pyeh," is from the Burmese. Perhaps the booth itself is of Burmese origin, but I do not know.

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through the east door and exit from the south side. The dragon was supposed at the time to be lying with its head to the west and its tail to the east.

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With the near approach of the wedding-day the friends of the groom gather at his village, blowing horns, beating on gongs and drums, striking cymbals, and chanting "htas." Early on the wedding-morn every one is astir. The rice is cooked and eaten by sunrise and, to an accompaniment of all the noisy instruments and with shouting and singing, the party sets forth. In the olden days, when the precepts of the elders were strictly observed, there was much drinking of liquor and boisterous sport on such occasions, but withal a certain decorum was not altogether lacking by reason of the halting of the procession from stage to stage and the reciting of appropriate verses. As the party is ready to leave the village they sing:

"To-day is a good day.
We shall see a maiden as fair as cotton-wool.
This is indeed a good day.
We shall behold one as fair as a cotton boll."

On setting forth, they do not overlook the unmarried girls of the village:

"Here you have not loved me.
Listen to my wedding-horns blowing yonder.
Remain here. You have not esteemed me.
Watch us depart with our horns blowing."

On the journey they sing:

"The wedding is timed at the coming of the rats.
Unless death intrudes, we shall prosper.
The marriage takes place when the rodents are here.
Unless death comes, we shall work and be happy." [8]

As they approach the bride's village a party greets them:

"The 'the kaw' blossoms in the dark of the moon.
The moon waxes and wanes.
The 'the kaw' blossoms in the full of the moon.
The moon increases and declines." [8]

The above stanza refers to the maidens, still unmarried, who are waiting from one moon to the next. The groom replies:

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[8] The years of full crops always bring a plague of rats in the hills. Thus, the time of rats is a time of prosperity.

[8] This verse, recited by the villagers, refers to the girls who have not yet married and are still waiting from one moon to the next.

101 Many of them [i.e. Karen, Ed.] have Karen AP7
[797] embraced Buddhism and more especially Christian-
ity. The American Baptist Mission has been most
successful among them and draws trainees for the
missionary and teaching profession from the
Karen. In the distant hill districts the tribes
can still be found in their original civiliza-
tion. There they still build their crude bamboo
[342] huts, often one for several families (21). The

21. Ferrars, ibid., p. 149.

Karenni (meaning red Karen) who live beyond the
British administration zone, but still under
British control, live together with a few kindred
tribes in a separate little state in the southeast
corner of the Southern Shan States--1911:
19,008. They are, without question, least
touched by civilization. Christianity has won
[771] over only a few converts among them; the demon
cult is still the predominant religion. The tall
361 masts, which are erected at sowing and harvesting
[782] time as sacrificial posts for the spirits, indi-
cate from afar the proximity of a Karenni vill-
age. A sturdy fence of bamboo wickerwork usually
encloses the village itself, and most of the time
/Figure 6--Interior of a Taungyo house in Myinka,
near Kalaw./ the individual houses are also
●343 fenced in (Plate VII, 1). The grain sheds, which
are small pile structures, stand some distance
away, usually outside the village fence because
of fire hazard. This is a custom which can be
observed among all Indochinese mountain tribes.
This practice is all the more surprising since in
the days when raids, robberies, and tribal feuds
were very frequent just the most valuable posses-
sions were kept outside the fort-like village
enclosures. The grain sheds were secured only
by a wooden bar and were accessible to everybody;
it was even customary to keep also other valuable
343 possessions in these huts. However, the grain shed
778 seems to have been revered as holy; it is said that

343 thefts from /216/ the grain sheds are extremely
778 rare (22).

[171] 22. T.C. Hodson reports this about the Naga, The Naga Tribes of Manipur (London, 1911), p. 42, in conjunction with McCulloch.

342 The crudely built bamboo house (Plate VII, 2) has in front a veranda which is reached by a steep ladder; the roof extends over the former (23).

23. A short remark about the Karenni house by A. Fischer, Zeitschrift für Ethnologie /Journal for Ethnology/, Vol. 35 (1903), pp. 991 ff.; the typical veranda of the house which has been reproduced here is completely damaged.

The occupants remain here during the daytime, and here the women keep their weaver's looms and spinning equipment; sometimes one of those [534] large bronze drums (pasi), which the literature mentions so often hang here. They belong to the most highly prized possessions of the Karen, and represent a very substantial barter element for the purchase of wives and similar transactions. The interior of the house contains only one room. [354] In its center is the fireplace with a structure hanging over it. On a bamboo platform, which stands around the entire wall space, are dishes, baskets, etc. The sleeping accommodations, not separated from each other, are in the rear of the room. Ears of corn and millet spikes--the [273] latter are used as an ingredient in the brewing [251] of rice brandy, which plays an important part with all the mountain tribes and also the Shan-- hang from the roof rafters. In between, hang large pieces of pork.